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news from the department of the interior, bureau of land management • fall 2003

We've Got a Plan For You

Anti-war protests, civil rights and the environmental movement–the 1960s were a decade of radical social change. The charged atmosphere of the '60s also brought rapid growth and fundamental change to the BLM–tumultuous change that permanently altered the Bureau's course.

Dominant use of the public land was supplanted by the philosophy of multiple use. Using the same area of land for two or more uses was legally endorsed and the BLM reorganized to integrate new programs such as wildlife, recreation, soil, and water resources with its traditional programs of range, forestry, lands and minerals through a land-use planning process.

The hope of this new land ethic was to, as then BLM Director Charles Stoddard said, "acquaint every American with the thought that he is part owner of a great national treasure–which is becoming ever more valuable as our population grows."

It would take extensive planning and involvement from the public to use and preserve these finite, interrelated and vulnerable resources.

"Once the public was invited in to the BLM's decision-making process, there was no turning back; the public took an increasing interest in BLM and increasingly did not agree with the agency's management."

Once the public was invited in to the BLM's decision-making process, there was no turning back; the public took an increasing interest in BLM and increasingly did not agree with the agency's management.

It took several attempts and a number of years to develop a uniform bureauwide land use planning system–management framework plans–that would integrate all of the Bureau's on-the-ground activities into a single effort. It also took some effort to convince BLM managers and employees that using the planning system to address and resolve differences among land users would save them repeated problems in the future.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) shaped the planning system BLM uses today.

NEPA requires that an environmental impact statement be prepared as an "action-forcing mechanism" so that agencies will discuss proposed actions with the public, with state and local governments and Indian tribes. NEPA also requires agencies to conduct extensive evaluations to formulate management alternatives.

FLPMA required BLM to improve its planning system as well as strengthen coordination among publics. These new improved plans were to be called resource management plans and they were to be developed in conjunction with an environmental impact statement.

BLM's planning system has become a reliable tool for examining land uses and resources issues together. The planning system offers many opportunities for people to have their say about BLM's resource decisions. That's not to say everyone comes to agreement, but there is a basic understanding of the planning system and the role land users have in helping manage the public lands.

Land use planning is BLM's premier cooperative effort. Over the years the planning system has improved because of public input and from legal challenges. The planning system will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the public land user as people get involved in the process.

A land use plan is the foundation for BLM's management decisions. It must be solid enough to support a resource decision, it should have enough flexibility to allow for common sense decisions, and it must accurately reflect the conditions of the land.

BLM's land use planning has been a long, and at times, strange trip since the 1960s. Like the environmental, civil rights, and peace movements, keeping close to the needs of the people is essential to meet the changes that each decade brings.

Opportunity and Challenge, The Story of BLM provided the source material for this article.

In This Issue:

Elko Fire Plan • 3
Black Rock Plan • 4
Churchill Plan • 6
Wild Horses • 7
Fire Teams • 8
Tall Whitetop • 10
Lovelock Cave • 11
Sensitive List • 12
Rip Van Winkle • 13
Mill Creek Day • 14
BLM Scholarships • 15

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State Director's Comments

Land use planning isn't for the faint hearted, dull witted or easily distracted among us. Seeing a plan through to completion takes tenacity, good humor, patience, and open mindedness. Those volumes of data and analysis may look daunting at a glance, but they are the basis of every decision a BLM manager makes. A good plan improves the chances of making a good decision.

BLM Nevada has 13 approved land use plans, but four of those are the old management framework plans that were developed without the appropriate environmental documentation. The management framework plans are all at least 20 years old. Good decisions can't be supported with an outdated plan.

Nevada has eight major planning efforts in the works. Nearly half of the public lands in Nevada will be involved with new planning during the next five years. This push to update land use plans is supported by Congress. Nevada's planning budget increased during the past five years from about one-half million dollars to nearly $2.2 million.

As times change, new issues and needs surface that many of our land use plans may not address. That is the case with wind energy. For the most part, our land use plans have nothing in them offering guidance for the development of wind energy. While we don't see any major impediments to facilitating wind energy projects or monitoring station permitting, it is a reminder of how we need to keep updating our existing land use plans to best serve the needs of today's public land user.

The group working on the Black Rock National Conservation Area (NCA) plan is to be commended for raising the bar for public participation. The Winnemucca Field Office staff did an excellent job of reaching out to the public for input into the plan and diligently working to meet the plan deadline. The Black Rock NCA plan is time sensitive because a date to have a final plan was enacted in the legislation that created the NCA.

Back in the mid-1980s, the BLM Nevada took the lead for the bureau in developing coordinated resource management and planning. This process involves everyone concerned with resource management in a given area, landowners, BLM and other agencies, resource users, and the interested public, to address resource conflicts at the local level. Major areas of conflict were sorted out through this process.

The BLM Nevada continues to make public participation the key ingredient in our resource plans. We need your opinions, concerns and help in identifying problems on how to manage your public lands.

Taking an interest in your public lands through the planning process is just the beginning of what we hope will be a long-term partnership. While planning is the foundation for success, implementing the actions identified in the plan is just as important. As we work together to update our land use plans in Nevada, let us remember that any decisions we reach through the public planning process should be based on sound science, be economically and environmentally feasible, and reflect common sense.

-Bob Abbey

Nevada Sage is published by the Nevada State Office, Bureau of Land Management, to inform the public and employees about BLM programs, people and activities in Nevada.

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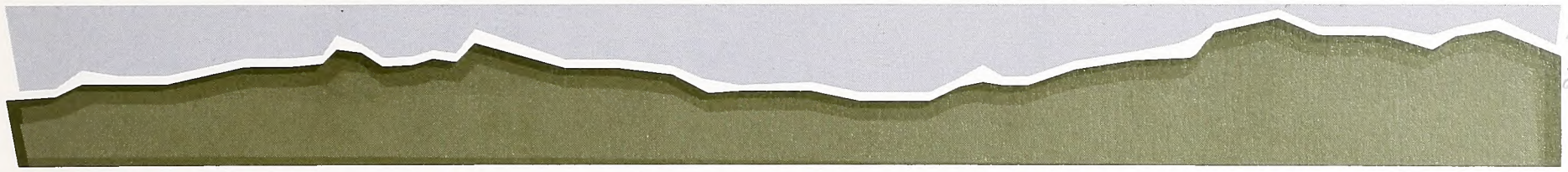


Elko Fire Management Plan Amendment

Why bother with a land use plan amendment that deals with fire? When wildfires occur, fire fighters put them out.

Sounds easy...but it's not quite that simple. The fire situation in northeast Nevada and the entire Great Basin has changed quite a bit since the Elko and Wells Resource Management Plans were adopted in the mid-1980s. Prior to 1999, about every 10 years the Elko Field Office would have a very large fire season burning tens of thousands of acres and then for eight or nine years, much smaller seasons. Starting in 1999, there were three consecutive years of burning very large blocks of land in northeast Nevada–some 1.3 million acres just in the Elko Field Office area.

In addition to changes in fire patterns, there have been increasing concerns from local citizens, cooperators and interest groups about critical habitat for wild horses and sensitive species such as Lahontan cutthroat trout; sage grouse habitat, wildlife habitat, and domestic livestock grazing and rangeland health.

Implementation of the National Fire Plan

The nation's 2000 fire season was the worst in 50 years–all over the West. As a result, the National Fire Plan provided new money for fire fighting and fire management. BLM was able to share tens of thousands of dollars with volunteer fire departments across Nevada. That money also helped us strengthen our fire organization in critical areas and increased our initial attack capability. The National Fire Plan also emphasized fuels management.

The BLM Elko Field Office started work on the Fire Amendment in July 2001. The primary goals of Elko's Fire Plan Amendment are to:

- Improve effectiveness of initial attack on fires that should be suppressed.
- Increase options for vegetation management prior to wild fires to reduce the scale, cost, and adverse impacts of large fires.
- Minimize damage to other resources through advance coordinated planning for suppression strategy and tactics based on each discipline involved.
- Lessen the impact of wildfire in habitat and public land-based sectors of the local economy such as recreation, hunting, and grazing.

A series of public meetings was held in late September 2001, in Elko, Wells, Eureka, and Jackpot to find out people's concerns and ideas about fire suppression and fire use. Those concerns raised by the public were grouped into four categories:

- Fire-fighting strategy and tactics
- Fuels management, including use of grazing as a tool
- Suppression zones
- Suppression and rehabilitation costs

The Draft Fire Plan Amendment was published in May 2002. Additional comments were received recommending some excellent modifications to the plan and they were incorporated into the plan. The proposed amendment was issued in August 2003; there will be a 60-day review for the public and the Nevada Governor's Clearing House. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biological opinion will be issued concurrently with the amendment.

Final approval of the amendment is expected this fall. Once approved, BLM will have more flexibility and increased efficiency to manage fire.

– Mike Brown
Elko Field Office

Coming Down to the Wire

When Congress designated 1.2 million acres of public lands in northwestern Nevada as the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA) and 10 associated wilderness areas, they gave the BLM three years to develop a management plan for the area. That was December 2000; time's about up.

The deadline, Dec. 20, 2003, put the planning effort in a "time-sensitive" mode. Get it accomplished on time, or explain to Congress why you didn't.

The NCA staff, under the direction of NCA Manager Dave Cooper, has concentrated their efforts to meet the deadline. That doesn't mean they've taken the easy way. Additional areas next to the NCA–the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Instant Study Area (which is managed like a wilderness study area), associated parcels of BLM–administered public lands east of the Summit Lake Paiute Indian Reservation, and the south playa northeast of Gerlach–were added into the Black Rock-High Rock Planning Area because it made sense for the plan to cover the whole area, not just the lands within the designation.

The planning area is about the size of Delaware and stretches across BLM district lines. That has required close cooperation among the Nevada and California BLM state offices, the Winnemucca and Surprise (Cedarville, Calif.) field offices, which manage public lands in the northwestern corner of Nevada, and the Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin and Northeast California resource advisory councils (RACs).

Unique characteristics of the area include its landscape and the visual setting observable from the emigrant trails, which are nearly unchanged from the time of emigration from the eastern United States to Oregon and California in the 1840s and '50s. Significant sites that need protection include sections of the California National Historic Trail and numerous hot springs, some of which are occupied by the threatened Soldier Meadows desert dace. On the other hand, the Black Rock Desert in northwestern Nevada is one of the largest playas (dry lake beds) in the United States.

The playa is an increasingly popular place to hold a wide variety of permitted recreational events and commercial activities. The legislation designating the NCA specified that these types of activities be allowed to continue in the area. Protect the area, but keep it open for people to enjoy.

Some of the issues considered:

- protect historic emigrant trails
- protect cultural resources
- protect two threatened fish species (Lahontan cut throat trout and desert dace)
- manage wilderness areas
- provide vehicle access to specially designated areas

PHOTO BY BRIAN MURDOCK

East Fork High Rock Canyon in the Black Rock NCA.

PHOTO BY BRIAN MURDOCK

BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Dave Lefevre heads into the High Rock Narrows in the Black Rock NCA.

- determine appropriate visitor facilities and signs
- consider economic effects of potential increase in visitation on local, county and state governments and local communities
- consider effects of increased visitor use on historic, cultural and natural resources

A few of the major steps in the planning process that have been taken include: forming a RAC NCA Subgroup; signing of a Pre-Plan Analysis; awarding a planning contract to Booz-Allen-Hamilton; creating a Black Rock Planning Team; filling the NCA staff positions; and getting the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and draft resource management plan out for public review.

Lots of public meetings have been held along the way. First, there were meetings to explain the effects of the NCA Act to the public. Next were meetings to solicit public involvement in the planning process. Then meetings were held to gather public comment during the formal scoping period. And most recently, meetings were held to solicit comments on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS)/draft resource management plan (RMP). The public review period ended on June 16, 2003. The thousands of comments received at the meetings, through the mail and electronically, are being analyzed, responses are being generated and resulting appropriate changes are being incorporated into the proposed plan.

Throughout the planning process, the NCA staff worked very closely with the RAC NCA Subgroup and its chairman, Don Klusman of Yuba City, Calif. The subgroup grew to 26 members and met 10 times. The members represented 15 different communities and a diverse range of interests. The subgroup helped to formulate and refine draft alternatives, as well as to determine and analyze impacts that could be expected from implementation of these alternatives. This cooperative effort is a model of collaborative planning that all involved agree was an unqualified success. The subgroup reached consensus on most issues and respectfully agreed to disagree on the remainder.

The final push is on to complete the RMP by the deadline. Major steps in the planning process that remain include: Nevada Governor's consistency review, Record of Decision and Final RMP. As scheduled, the BLM will complete the plan one-day before the deadline. That day will bring a collective sigh of relief by everyone on the NCA staff.

NCA Manager Cooper summed up the experience so far by saying, "The Black Rock collaborative planning process has been the finest example of broad-based public involvement characterized by universal and mutual respect among people with widely differing views and positions that I have seen in my 28 years of government service. I am proud to have been involved in it, and also very proud of my dedicated, hard-working staff, as well as the other BLMers who have worked with us."

–Jamie Thompson
Winnemucca Field Office

It All Started With a Little Green Energy

Have you ever started a project, only to find the more you do, the more needs to be done? That happened to the Carson City Field Office as they neared completion of an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze the pending geothermal lease applications.

Nearly 59,000 acres were determined suitable for leasing, but another 36,000 acres were deferred pending completion of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Through the EA process it became clear that the existing resource management plan did not adequately address or analyze energy resources on a site-specific basis. If the field office were to receive an application for a geothermal lease outside the area studied in the EA, they would be looking at doing another EA for that application.

Meanwhile, other resource concerns were surfacing:

- The Fallon Naval Air Station needs to revise their Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), a joint BLM/Navy document completed in 2001, to address new issues relevant to Navy-controlled lands, including expansion of the buffer zone around the base for security.

- The BLM Carson City Field Office needs to amend the Fire Management Plan to revise the categories for specific areas in Churchill County. The plan will also address urban interface, wildfire risk assessment, wildfire risk mitigation, fire rehabilitation, fire management on Navy lands adjacent to public lands, and interagency cooperation.

- The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe has expressed concern regarding sacred or religious sites, and will be an active partner in any land use planning for the area.

- Churchill County is updating its Master Plan to include open space planning and resource preservation and has requested BLM assistance.

The decision was made to prepare a comprehensive plan amendment and associated EIS for all energy resources that will go far beyond analyzing energy resources. The "Little Green Geothermal Plan that Could" has now expanded beyond energy development to Navy base expansion, open space preservation, conservation easements, recreational opportunities and impacts, a revised Sand Mountain Recreation Management Plan, off-highway vehicle designations, visual resource designations, historic roads and trails protection, sacred and religious site protection, land tenure, public access, utility corridors, and threatened, endangered and sensitive species protection!

Although the Churchill County Plan Amendment will address energy resources for the entire BLM Carson City district, all other issues described will be analyzed for Churchill County only. A private contract will be awarded to prepare the plan amendment and EIS.

What started to bog down from complications, is now revived by the positive attitudes toward the project from the Navy and Churchill County. For the Navy, this active partnership will lead to revisions of their INRMP in a cost-effective manner. The Churchill County Planning Commission and county staffers have welcomed discussing their open space planning efforts with the BLM.

–Mark Struble

Carson City Field Office

WILD HORSES

Nevada Numbers Near Desired Management Level

A few words in the 1971 Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act deliver a big message.

Congress directs that land managers "...protect and manage wild free-roaming horses and burros as a component of the public lands" and that management be "...in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

Nevada is home to more than half of the Nation's wild horses and burros, with approximately 20,000 of the 39,000 horses and burros living on rangelands in ten Western states. The official fiscal year 2002 population is the lowest count in a decade, and Nevada is nearer than ever to achieving what the BLM calls appropriate management levels or AMLs.

Wild horses in the Black Rock area.

Easier said than done! The AML is a number set after considering the habitat requirements of the animals, the relationships with other uses of the public and adjacent private lands and what the regulations call the "constraints" of being within herd areas. (Herd areas are the geographic locations where horses and burros were found in 1971 when the Act was passed.) The AML takes into account such things as wildlife use in the area and permitted livestock grazing. To assure fairness to all species, before a final AML can be set for a herd management area, monitoring data must be collected and all uses considered in the land-use planning document.

Can a gather occur before AML is set? Yes, if it is an emergency such as a drought or severe loss of habitat such as might occur in a wildfire. However, domestic livestock use reduction or suspension must also be addressed when such removal occurs.

With a Bureau-wide goal of establishing AMLs for all herd management areas by the end of 2005, Nevada is focused on achieving an AML estimated to be about 14,000 to 15,000 animals in 102 herd management areas.

If adequate funding continues in fiscal years 2004 and 2005, Nevada will meet its goal and be able to refocus efforts from gathers to managing each herd. Instead of removing 5,000 to 6,000 animals each year, the Nevada gathers of excess animals to be offered for adoption could drop to 2,500 to 3,500 per year.

Progress toward attaining AML on the range has been steady since Congress funded the comprehensive wild horse and burro management strategy in 2001. National numbers then were 45,000 animals, or 18,000 above the 27,000 national estimated AML.

–Maxine Shane

Nevada State Field Office

BLM Nevada Hosts Three SCA Volunteer Teams

BLM Nevada hosted three teams of volunteers from the Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps this summer.

The BLM Carson City Field Office hosted Team Reno and Team Carson City.

Team Reno concentrated its efforts in wildland-urban interface area communities in the valleys north of Reno. They worked with volunteer fire departments in Lemmon Valley, Red Rock, Rancho Haven, Palomino Valley and Silver Lake.

Team Carson City returned for a third year and worked in the Mound House, Virginia City Highlands, Kings Canyon, Timberline, and Pinion Hills communities around Carson City. They also plan to revisit homes that have received SCA team assessments the previous two summers so they can evaluate how effective the SCA team efforts were in previous years.

The Carson team also worked on a fuels reduction project in the Mound House area and a fuels reduction demonstration project in the Virginia Highlands.

The BLM Winnemucca Field Office hosted its first-ever SCA team. They targeted Winnemucca-area rural communities in the wildland-urban interface.

Before coming to Nevada in June, team members underwent extensive training in fire ecology, mitigation, and education training in McCall, Idaho. Once in Nevada, they received specific training for the Great Basin area, including the University of Nevada, Reno's "Living with Fire" program, local fire history, and native plants and species that promote and retard the spread of wildland fire.

Working with the BLM and local area fire departments, the SCA teams conducted wildland fire home evaluations and provided homeowners and community officials with information to protect themselves, their property and their community from a wildfire that could occur near their area.

The teams attended events and meetings sponsored by the Alpine County Fire Safe Council, Fire Safe Highlands, and the Nevada Fire Safe Council, as well as other interested public service organizations.

"The SCA teams are successful getting their message out to the public in an engaging and non-threatening manner," said BLM Nevada Fire Management Officer Kevin Hull. "They work hard to raise public awareness about the dangers of wildfire, help home and business owners protect both their lives and their property, and also help the people of northern Nevada create fire-safe communities."

–Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

TEAM CARSON CITY
- Team Leader Melissa Jones, San Marcos, Texas
- Jena Lund, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota
- Derek Swingley, Muncie, Indiana
- Adam Wilson, Richmond, Virginia
- Carlena Blake, Loon Lake, Washington

TEAM WINNEMUCCA
- Team Leader Jenny Seiler, Lafayette, Louisiana
- Josh Ray, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
- Kember Pollington, Spokane, Washington
- Erika Dinkel-Smith, Menomonie, Wisconsin
- Ryan McDonald-O'Lear, Portland, Oregon

TEAM RENO
- Team Leader Katie Myszka, Athens, Georgia
- Richard Sluznis, Potomac, Maryland
- Michelle Cavanaugh, Randallstown, Maryland
- Alicia McCormick, Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania
- Jeannie Miller, Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania

Rye Patch Residents Welcome SCA Volunteers

In the summer of 1999, Georgia Morgan and her Rye Patch neighbors became true believers in creating defensible space for their rural homes.

In May of that year, the flames crept all the way to the other side of Old Victory Highway, which runs in front of Georgia's home. In early August 1999, when thousands of acres were burning across Northern Nevada, another wildfire was stopped at the Humboldt River, only two miles away.

"Ever since the 1999 fires we're all more worried about this," she said. "It just moves so fast when it burns here."

Team Winnemucca of the Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps helped home and business owners create defensible space from wildland fire around their properties. From the left, Jenny Seiler, Erika Dinkel-Smith, Josh Ray, Ryan McDonald-O'Lear, Kember Pollington.

Originally from Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, Georgia and her husband, Wayne, have lived in Rye Patch for the past four years. She is executive director of the Humboldt River Ranch Association, which covers 2,140 lots in the Rye Patch area. Wayne works at the Newmont Mine in Midas.

The sagebrush has grown back in the field across the road from Georgia's house, along with a lot of cheatgrass that wasn't there before.

Higher than average rainfall in April and May gave a boost to cheatgrass and other annual grasses in Rye Patch and many rural areas near Winnemucca. Within a matter of weeks this spring bumper crop of annual grasses dried up with the high temperatures and low humidity of June and July.

These dried up fields of cheatgrass only need a tiny spark to start a dangerous, fast-moving wildfire.

This fire season, the BLM Winnemucca Field Office hosted two National Fire Prevention Teams, which are assessing fuel conditions in the Winnemucca area and disseminating fire prevention messages aimed at reducing human-caused fires.

BLM Winnemucca also hosted a team of volunteers from the Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps this summer. SCA Team Winnemucca spent the summer helping area home and business owners create defensible space from wildland fire around their properties.

On a hot, dry Thursday evening, three members of SCA Team Winnemucca pulled into Georgia's driveway to do a defensible space home assessment. Kember Pollington, Josh Ray and Erika Dinkel-Smith all had different jobs to do in the home assessment, but not before Georgia gave each of them a welcoming hug and a broad smile.

"I think it's amazing how they do this," she said. "These young people have a lot of courage, going up to complete strangers and offering advice on fire prevention."

As they walk around the house, Josh asks Georgia about the roads coming into and out of her neighborhood. He suggests that she apply fire-resistant coating to her wooden deck, and put wire mesh screening under the deck to keep burning embers from igniting the deck's underside.

Rye Patch is a pretty flat place, and winds can be ferocious on hot, summer afternoons. During a wildfire, these afternoon winds can be downright dangerous.

"Nothing much stops the wind when it blows through here," Georgia said. We're trying to get some trees to grow, but it's gonna take about 100 years."

As the team left Georgia's home to do another home assessment, she reminded them that they were all invited to a barbecue later that evening.

"They're a close-knit community out here in Rye Patch," Josh said. "They take care of each other."

BLM used special funding from the National Fire Plan to pay for the risk assessments and SCA team, as well as for work in Winnemucca communities at risk in the wildland-urban interface.

SCA teams go door to door in communities to evaluate:

- Accessibility by road, signing and Global Positioning Satellite information on the home location.
- Power lines.
- Other human uses like camping, skiing and roadside picnicking.
- Water and fire hydrant systems.
- Past wildland-urban interface defensible space efforts.

–Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

Cows Clear the Way, Sheep Eat the Whitetop

Just throw in some hay, and cows and sheep will do the rest.

That's the strategy in a nutshell. At the University of Nevada, Reno's S Bar S Ranch, controlling tall whitetop infestation along the Truckee River means luring cattle with hay into thick, towering stands of dead whitetop, which the cows trample on their way to dinner.

As the new growth of whitetop, which is also commonly called perennial pepperweed, comes in, the sheep follow the trail blazed by the cows, and eat the whitetop right down to the ground. After successive treatments for three growing seasons, the tall whitetop is gone.

Infestations of both tall whitetop and tamarisk are heavy on many public lands, according to Ted Angle, BLM Nevada's weed management program coordinator. "Creative, yet simple actions are what we need to combat invasive weeds in Nevada," Angle said. "This kind of innovation will help us succeed in the fight against invasive species."

PHOTO BY RICHARD BROWN

Sheep graze on tall whitetop along the Truckee River.

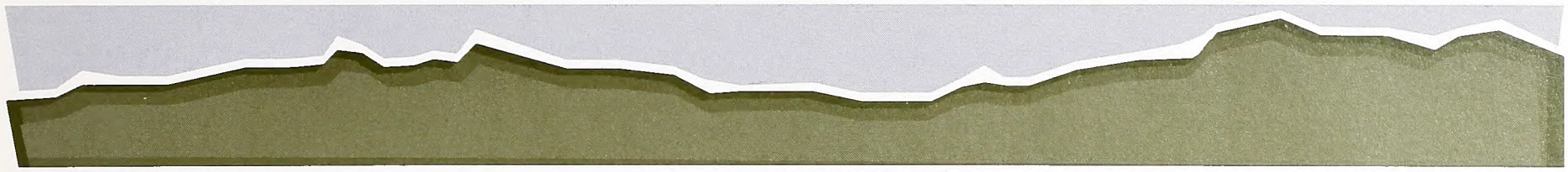
BLM Nevada is working with the UNR College of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service on other grazing experiments on public lands. The projects include grazing sheep to control cheatgrass and tumble mustard at the 26 Mile Ranch north of Battle Mountain, and grazing cattle to control cheatgrass on the Grass Valley grazing allotment north of Austin.

The whitetop-munching experiment began in March 2002 and is in its second season, according to Hudson Glimp, Wiegand Professor for the UNR College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources.

Glimp's enthusiasm for grazing down the tall whitetop is understandable, since the alternative would have been heavy reliance on herbicides in a riparian area. "Here along the Truckee River, I have a lot of heartburn with using a lot of chemicals," Glimp said. The experiment took place on 160 acres along the Truckee River, owned by Ralph and Elmira Copeland. Surrounded by tribal lands like the Copeland Ranch, the S Bar S Ranch specializes in this sort of research, as well as teaching and training.

At the start of the experiment, the stands of tall whitetop were a solid mass of dead plant material and new growth, anywhere from 6 to 10 feet tall. The sheep wouldn't go into these thick stands to get the new growth, according to Glimp. But where the cattle stomped, the sheep followed. "The ideal strategy is to put 500 sheep on five acres for five days, and they'll take it right to the ground," Glimp said. "Then the sheep can be rotated back onto the plot every month or so."

On the Copeland plot, the sheep were rotated in four times per season. After the second season, less than five or 10 percent of the whitetop came back, and the sheep made short work of that. "Let the sheep take it down to one percent of what you had, then you can hand spray the rest of it," Glimp said. On one of the Copeland plots near the river, cottonwood trees and tamarisk grew in the drainage area, surrounded by a new growth of tall whitetop. Bare dirt was everywhere, evidence that the sheep had been at work there. Glimp said he's hoping to graze goats on the tamarisk in the area next year.☞



"The sheep and their guard llamas pruned some branches and foliage on the tamarisk, but goats do a better job–they eat all the way through the bark, killing the plant," said Glimp.

For Glimp, grazing down invasive species is a solution with a lot of potential. Invasive riparian species like tall whitetop and tamarisk are water hogs, and in an arid place like Nevada water-hogging plants are a huge problem. Urban areas in Western states are increasingly competing with agriculture for the region's scarce water resources. Urban areas are getting an increasingly large share of the water, with agriculture getting an increasingly smaller share, according to Glimp. Getting rid of the tamarisk and the tall whitetop would free up tremendous amounts of water. One mature tamarisk can consume as much as 200 gallons of water per day. "We need to conserve water and control weeds, especially in the irrigation ditches," Glimp said. "Otherwise we could end up with tamarisk and whitetop along the Truckee from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake."

Other invasive plant species are creeping into the state, according to Glimp. These include such noxious weeds as yellow starthistle and purple loosestrife. "To get the upper hand in the war on weeds, we need to use as many tools as possible," Angle said. "UNR is showing that selective grazing is an effective way to knock out some of the riparian weeds."

–Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

Driving Through Time...

The Lovelock Cave Back Country Byway is a 20-mile driving tour filled with thousands of years of human history and prehistory. The Byway starts at the Marzen House Museum in Lovelock, passes by the historic Chinatown district and Lovelock's early 1900s round courthouse, and crosses the California Emigrant Trail on the way to Lovelock Cave. The cave was used for thousands of years to store items such as duck decoys, mats and bags made from tule reeds. The decoys, at 2,000 years old, are the oldest in the world. The site has been completely excavated and all artifacts have been removed to museums.

Completion of the Byway was accomplished through the efforts of many partners. Improvements such as road work, interpretive signs, restrooms, a nature trail and a driving guide were made to add to the enjoyment of the Byway. The Byway received the support of the local community, including the Lovelock Paiute Colony, City of Lovelock, Pershing County, Churchill County, Nevada Department of Transportation, Nevada State Museum, and University of Nevada, Reno, as well as many other individuals.

Lovelock Cave Back Country Byway Dedication

Join the BLM and the many partners who helped make the Byway at a celebration and dedication on Saturday, Oct. 18, 1:00 p.m. at the Marzen House Museum in Lovelock. A brief ceremony will be held at the museum grounds, then a tour bus will travel the Byway. The bus will leave the museum at 2 p.m.

Please RSVP to the BLM at (775) 623-1500 if you would like to take the free bus tour. The bus will return to the museum by 4:30 p.m.

Nevada's Sensitive Species

BLM Nevada has an updated list of sensitive species on public lands thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The revised list is for species that are not already included as BLM Special Status Species under Federal listing or State listed species. The sensitive species designation is used for species that occur on public land where BLM has the management capability to significantly affect the conservation status of the species.

BLM policy is to provide sensitive species with the same level of protection as is provided for federal candidate species by offering protective measures to avoid future listing as a threatened or endangered species. Placement on the sensitive species list is to ensure that BLM actions will not increase the likelihood that these species would move toward a federal listing. Taking preventative, corrective action can involve relatively simple actions like adjusting the boundaries of an off-highway race or fencing a sensitive spring.

"Native species that make the sensitive list are species that are globally rare," said Glenn Clemmer, Director of the Nevada State Natural Heritage Program. "They may be species that only occur in Nevada, or species that are heading for trouble in other states, too. If a native species is dwindling in numbers in Nevada, but there are still healthy numbers in other states, it's not included in the sensitive list."

There are 276 species on the revised list: 31 species of mammals, mostly bats, but also includes the desert bighorn sheep and the river otter; 33 species of birds; six species of reptiles; three species of amphibians; 25 species of fishes; 26 species of snails; one freshwater mussel; two species of bees; one true bug; 14 species of beetles; 28 species of butterflies; and 106 plant species.

"Nevada has an amazing biodiversity," said Bob Abbey, Nevada State Director. "This state ranks 11th in the nation for the number of different native species and 6th in the number of endemic species, which are species that do not occur outside the state. Because many of these species depend on the public lands, it is up to the BLM to help ensure this rich biological diversity continues to be a hallmark of this state.

"What got BLM's attention is our ranking as 3rd highest for percentage of species at risk among the states," said Abbey. "There is no doubt we face a conservation challenge, and I am confident that effective conservation measures are possible. Local action is the answer and it has been my experience that people in Nevada are ready to step up and do what needs to be done to head off possible federal action."

The species rankings were tallied by NatureServe, a non-profit organization that complies data from the 50 states and provides summaries and rankings in various categories. The sensitive species list is available at **www.nv.blm.gov**.

Rip Van Winkle's Nightmare

The Rip Van Winkle mine operated from about 1915 to 1951–long before companies were required to post bond to reclaim lands after mining operations cease. All that remains of the mine and mill site are building foundations, a collapsed shaft and adits, the remains of a rail haulage system, tailings ponds, a waste rock dump, and about four acres of public land contaminated by acid-generating and heavy metal-bearing tailings and waste rock from the production of lead, zinc and silver ore.

"The major concern at the site is with seven dams that were built across Coon Creek," said Deb McFarlane, BLM geologist and hazardous material coordinator with the Elko Field Office. "Heavy metal-bearing mine tailings were dumped behind six of the dams. Coon Creek and its tributary have breached the dams and heavy metals and acid are leaching from the tailings and polluting Coon Creek. Coon Creek is a tributary of Maggie Creek, important habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout, a threatened species."

"The Rip Van Winkle mine cleanup is a classic case for why mine bonding is needed," said Dave Vandenberg, BLM Elko assistant field manager. "We're very concerned with the environmental hazard this mine represents and have analyzed four possible cleanup scenarios."

Rip Van Winkle mine in 1940.

Rip Van Winkle mine area in 2000.

BLM's recently published Draft Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis evaluates the four alternatives. All four alternatives address the two main objectives of a clean up: 1) to limit contact of the tailings with water, and 2) limit exposure of humans and animals to the tailings. Limiting the contact with water could be accomplished by rerouting Coon Creek and its tributary or by removing the tailings from the streambed and flood plain of both streams. Limiting human and animal contact with the tailings could be accomplished by fencing the site or by capping the tailings.

After public review and comment, the analysis will be finalized and a course of action will be selected. The cleanup is expected to start this fall. The BLM plans to leave the old buildings as they are part of the rich cultural history of northeastern Nevada.

–Mike Brown
Elko Field Office

13th Annual Environmental Education Field Day
Mill Creek Campground, Battle Mountain

About 100 sixth grade students and teachers from Battle Mountain and Austin spent the day at Mill Creek just before the end of school, getting some hands on learning supporting the schools' environmental studies and habitat curriculum. BLM staff showed the students how to put out a campfire and gave them other outdoor fire safety tips, had the students plant cottonwood trees, gave some basic instruction in surveying, and introduced them to an adopted wild horse named Willow. The teachers fired up barbecues for a hot dog lunch. The Owl Club donated the hot dogs and Midway Market donated buns.

BLM Scholarships Invest in Agency's Future

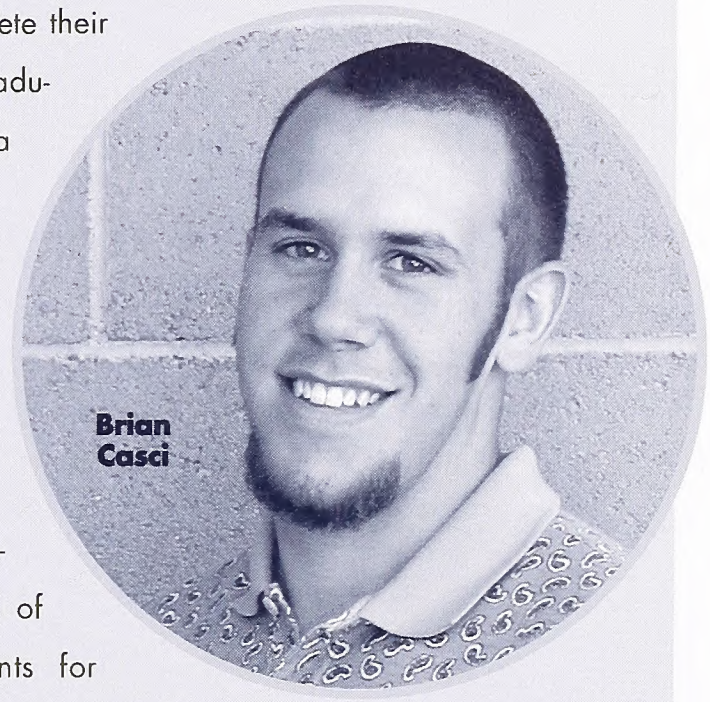
BLM Nevada recently made an investment in the agency's future, awarding $2,500 college scholarships to two Reno–area high school graduates from the Class of 2003.

Jessica Campbell graduated from the I Can Do Anything Charter School, and will attend Truckee Meadows Community College to pursue a degree in environmental science and natural resource management.

Brian Casci graduated from Sparks High School, and will attend the University of Nevada, Reno, to major in agriculture and applied economics. He says he would eventually like to work in the field of wildlife management.

Jessica Campbell

The $2,500 scholarships will help pay for the students' first academic year of college tuition, fees and books. Both Jessica and Brian will be assigned to work as Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) trainees at a BLM field office during their summer and winter breaks from school. After one year as SCEP students, they will also be eligible for tuition assistance of $1,500 per year for tuition, fees and books.


Brian Casci

If they complete their studies and graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in a natural resources field, and if they successfully complete all of the requirements for SCEP students, they will be eligible for a recommendation from the BLM for a full-time federal position.

Jessica and Brian competed with two other Reno-area high school seniors for the scholarships. A panel of three BLM employees judged the four application packets. In order to compete for the scholarship, each student was required to submit:

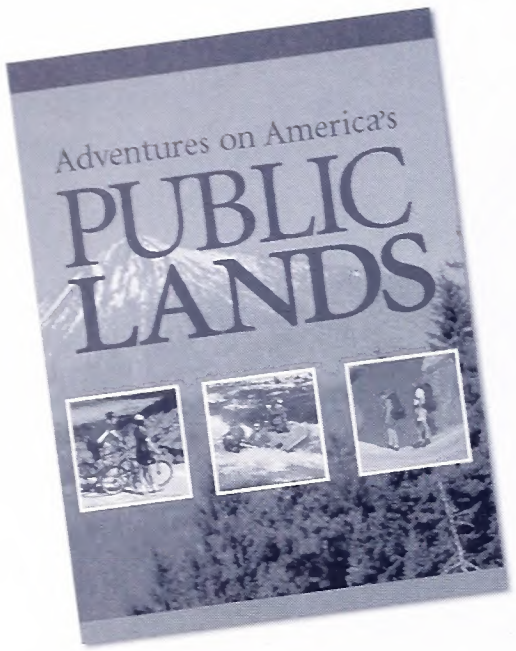
- A letter of interest in cating why they should receive the scholarship.
- Letters of recommendation from their high school.
- A letter of acceptance for admission to a college or university.
- High school transcript.
- Course schedules for the 2003 Fall Semester.

–Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

PHOTOS BY RICHARD BROWN

COMING SOON

New Guide to Recreation Opportunities on BLM Public Lands!



Vast and varied, BLM public lands comprise America's largest acreage available for recreation, and offer outdoors enthusiasts unparalleled leisure opportunities to suit almost any taste, often within a short drive from home. Highlighting prime destinations in 20 sites, *Adventures on America's Public Lands* is a full-color, illustrated guide to a broad range of recreational activities on public lands administered by the BLM. From canyon climbing to dog mushing, mountain biking to hang gliding, archaeological study to wildlife viewing, BLM public lands offer recreationists a world of unique activities and memorable vacations.

Written, edited and illustrated by BLM staff, *Adventures on America's Public Lands* is published by Smithsonian Books. Paperback, $22.95, 510 pages, ISBN 1-58834-081-3. Available from fine booksellers worldwide in Fall 2003.

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